DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 452 283 UD 034 052

AUTHOR	Eisner, Caroline, Ed.
TITLE	Making the Grade: A Report on SAT I Results in the Nation's Urban Schools.
INSTITUTION	Council of the Great City Schools, Washington, DC.; College Board, New York, NY.
PUB DATE	2001-03-00
NOTE	40p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Council of the Great City Schools, 1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 702, Washington, DC 20004 ($10). Tel: 202-393-2427; Fax: 202-393-2400; Web site: http://www.cgcs.org. For ful text: http://www.cgcs.org/reports/home/sat_1999.htm.
PUB TYPE	Numerical/Quantitative Data (110) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Academic Achievement; Asian American Students; Black Students; *Grades (Scholastic); High Schools; Hispanic American Students; Income; Racial Differences; Sex Differences; Standardized Tests; Student Characteristics; Student Evaluation; *Urban Schools; White Students
IDENTIFIERS	Course Taking Patterns; *Scholastic Assessment Tests

ABSTRACT

This is the first comprehensive study to examine SAT I Math and Verbal test results for the nation's urban schools. This report, prepared in collaboration with The College Board, examines 1998-99 SAT I Math and Verbal test results in 58 Great City Schools (GCS) districts, analyzing test scores on: number of test-takers; race/ethnicity and gender; percentage of test-takers with core or more academic preparation; mean Math and Verbal Scores; mean scores by academic preparation, gender, and household income; mean scores of African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Whites; and achievement gaps by academic preparation, gender, race/ethnicity, and household income. About 1 million exams were administered nationally during 1998-99, with 10 percent of all test-takers nationally from the GCS. Test-takers nationally were more likely to be white. GCS test-takers were more likely to be African American or Hispanic. In both settings, females outnumbered males, and males had higher SAT I Math and Verbal scores. Average SAT I Verbal and Math scores nationally were about 10 percent higher than GCS scores. Overall, White students had the highest scores, and African American students had the lowest scores, in both settings. Six out of ten test-takers in both settings had taken core or more academic coursework. Average SAT scores increased as household incomes increased nationally and in the GCS. Document includes 2 tables and 37 figures. Appendices include: (1) Description of SAT I Math and Verbal Subtests; (2) Definition of "Core" and "Less than Core" Academic Preparation; and (3) Great City School District. SM)

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MAKING THE GRADE

A REPORT ON SAT I RESULTS IN THE NATION'S URBAN SCHOOLS

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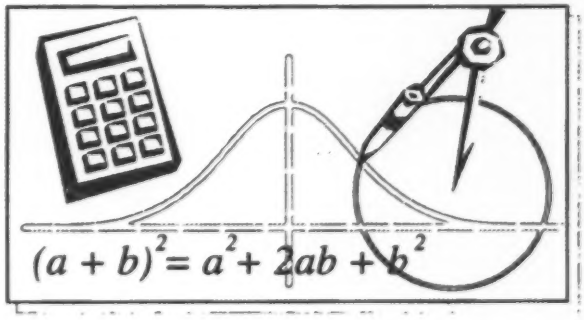

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Making the Grade:

A Report on SAT I Results in the Nation's Urban Schools

Council of the Great City Schools

and

The College Board

March 2001

The Council of the Great City Schools and The College Board thank the following individuals for their work on this report:

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Making the Grade was prepared by the Council of the Great City Schools and The College Board. Each organization thanks the other for its skilled work in producing this report.

The College Board conducted the statistical analyses of SAT test results and provided technical assistance on interpreting the findings.

The Council of the Great City Schools took primary responsibility for analyzing the data and writing the report. Council staff advised The College Board on variables to use in the data analysis. The Council was also responsible for the report's layout and graphics.

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MAKING THE GRADE: A REPORT ON SAT I RESULTS IN THE NATION'S URBAN SCHOOLS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Making the Grade: A Report on SAT I Results in the Nation's Urban Schools is the first comprehensive study to examine SAT I Math and Verbal test results in the nation's urban schools. The Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS) and The College Board prepared the report, using SAT results from Council member districts.

The primary purpose of this research was to provide urban educators, and those interested in urban education, with a way to examine student achievement in the Great City Schools (GCS) in the context of rising standards. In addition, the report was prepared to allow urban school district personnel to compare their SAT I Math and Verbal scores to national averages and to other urban school systems facing similar challenges.

Making the Grade examines both SAT I Math and Verbal scores. Data on the GCS consist of SAT results from 58 major urban school districts during the 1998-99 school year. The report summarizes average results across cities and SAT scores nationally. It also analyzes SAT Math and Verbal scores using the following variables:

- Number of test-takers
- Race/ethnicity and gender of test-takers
- Percentage of test-takers with core or more academic preparation
- Mean SAT I Math and Verbal scores
- Mean scores by academic preparation
- Mean scores by gender
- Mean scores of African American, Asian American, Hispanic, and White test-takers
- Mean scores by household income
- Achievement gaps by academic preparation
- Achievement gaps by gender
- Achievement gaps by race/ethnicity
- Achievement gaps by household income

The report, *Making the Grade,* found that—

⇨ Approximately one million SAT I Math and Verbal exams were administered nationally during the 1998-99 school year.

⇨ About 10% of all test-takers nationally were from the GCS.

⇨ Test-takers nationally were more likely to be White; test-takers in the GCS were more likely to be African American or Hispanic.

⇨ Female test-takers outnumbered male test-takers nationally and in the GCS; but male test-takers had higher SAT I Math and Verbal scores than females in both settings.

- Average SAT I Verbal and Math scores for students nationally were about 10% higher than for students in the GCS.

- White students, on average, outscored Asian American, Hispanic, and African American students on SAT I Verbal tests nationally and in the GCS.

- African American students, on average, scored lower than Asian American, Hispanic, and White students on SAT I Math and Verbal tests nationally and in the GCS.

- White test-takers in the GCS who took core courses scored about the same in SAT I Math and Verbal as White test-takers nationally

- Approximately six out of ten SAT test-takers nationally and in the GCS had taken core or more academic coursework.

- White students taking the SAT nationally and in the GCS were more likely to have also taken core or more academic coursework than students from other racial groups.

- African American, Asian American, and Hispanic test-takers nationally and in the GCS took core or more academic coursework at similar rates.

- Approximately 50% of all SAT I Math test-takers nationally and in the GCS had taken four or more years of mathematics coursework; and about 70% of all SAT Verbal test-takers had taken four or more years of English coursework.

- SAT test-takers with four or more years of math or English coursework nationally and in the GCS outscored test-takers with less coursework.

- Average SAT I Math and Verbal scores increased as household incomes increased nationally and in the GCS.

- Average SAT I Verbal scores of test-takers nationally and in the GCS were the same at household incomes of $100,000 or more.

- Average SAT score differences between the nation and the GCS declined as household income increased.

I. Introduction and Data Analysis

Making the Grade examines SAT I scores for students in the Great City Schools and across the nation. Results were compiled on 58 urban districts for the 1998-99 school year (see Appendix D for a complete list of participating districts). The study also analyzes the relationship between average SAT I Verbal and Math scores and the—

- Number of test-takers
- Race/ethnicity and gender of test-takers
- Percentage of test-takers with core or more academic preparation
- Mean SAT I Math and Verbal scores
- Mean scores by academic preparation
- Mean scores by gender
- Mean scores of African American, Asian American, Hispanic, and White test-takers
- Mean scores by household income
- Achievement gaps by academic preparation
- Achievement gaps by gender
- Achievement gaps by race/ethnicity
- Achievement gaps by household income

The College Board conducted the statistical analyses of the SAT I Math and Verbal scores and CGCS analyzed the findings and wrote the report.

II. Characteristics of GCS and National SAT I Test-takers

- GCS districts administered approximately 110,000 SAT I Math and Verbal exams in 1998-99, or about 9% of the number (1.2 million) of SAT I tests given nationally. *(Table 1)*
- Of the test-takers who reported their ethnicity, about 27% of GCS test-takers were White, compared with 61% nationally. *(Figures 1 and 2)*
- Approximately 27% of GCS test-takers who reported their ethnicity were African American, compared with only 10% nationally. *(Figures 1 and 2)*
- About 19% of GCS test-takers who reported their ethnicity were Hispanic, compared with only 8% nationally. *(Figures 1 and 2)*
- African American test-takers in the GCS comprised about 24% of all African Americans tested nationally. *(Table 1)*
- Hispanic test-takers in the GCS comprised about 22% of all Hispanics tested nationally. *(Table 1)*
- Approximately 58% of test-takers in the GCS were female; about 54% of test-takers nationally were female. *(Figures 3 and 4)*
- SAT I test-takers in the GCS were more likely to come from households with incomes below $40,000 than test-takers nationally. *(Table 2)*

Table 1: SAT I Math and Verbal
Total Number of Test-Takers by Ethnicity: GCS and Nation

Ethnicity	CGCS	National	CGCS as % of National
American Indian	700	8,379	8%
Asian American	13,175	97,431	14%
African American	29,109	120,755	24%
Hispanic	20,851	96,410	22%
White	29,026	736,885	4%
Other	4,775	38,939	12%
No Response	10,328	104,279	10%
TOTAL	**107,964**	**1,203,078**	**9%**

Figure 1: SAT I Math and Verbal
Percentage of GCS Test-Takers by Ethnicity

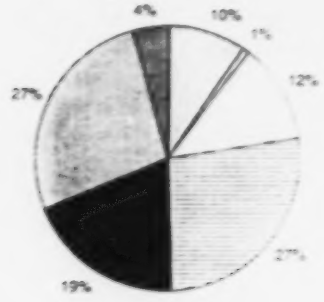

Figure 2: SAT I Math and Verbal
Percentage of National Test-Takers by Ethnicity

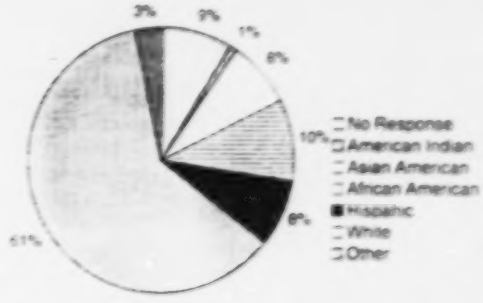

Figure 3: SAT I Math and Verbal
Percentage of GCS Test-Takers by Gender

Figure 4: SAT I Math and Verbal
Percentage of National Test-Takers by Gender

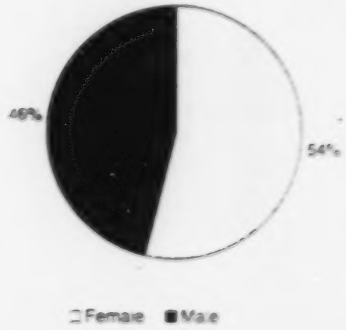

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Table 2: SAT I Math and Verbal
Total Number of Test-Takers by Household Income: GCS and Nation

Household Income	CGCS	National
Less Than $10,000	10,999	42,117
$10,000-$25,000	24,287	129,875
$25,000-$40,000	18,402	172,811
$40,000-$60,000	13,581	206,410
$60,000-$80,000	8,460	160,870
$80,000-$100,000	4,483	93,973
Over $100,000	5,279	135,582
No Response	17,360	202,497
Total*	**102,851**	**1,144,135**

*Totals for Household Income do not match totals for all test-takers due to errors in student responses.

III. GCS and National Mean SAT I Scores

- The average SAT I Math score in the GCS was 468, compared with 512 nationally. *(Figure 5)*
- The average SAT Verbal score in the GCS was 460, compared with 506 nationally. *(Figure 5)*
- The average SAT I Verbal and Math scores for students nationally were about 10% higher than the GCS. *(Figure 5)*
- The gap in SAT I Math and Verbal scores between GCS students and students nationally was 44 and 46 points, respectively. *(Figure 6)*

Figure 5:
GCS and National SAT I Math and Verbal Mean Scores

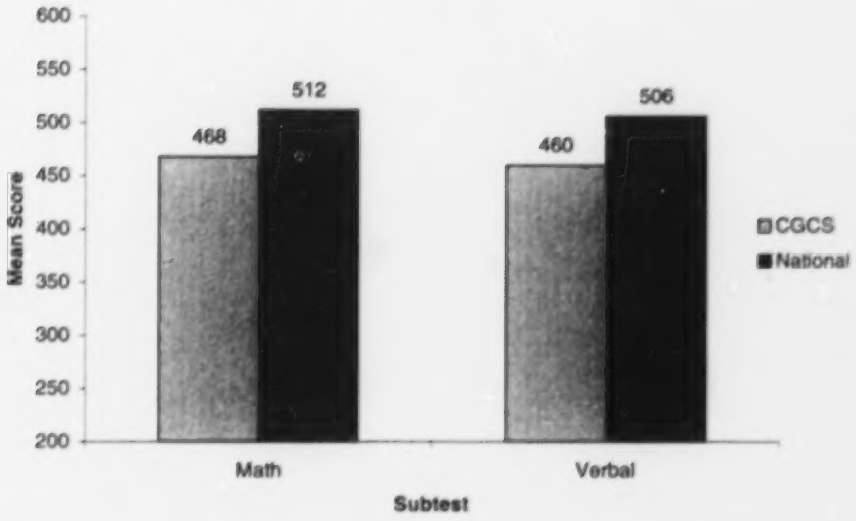
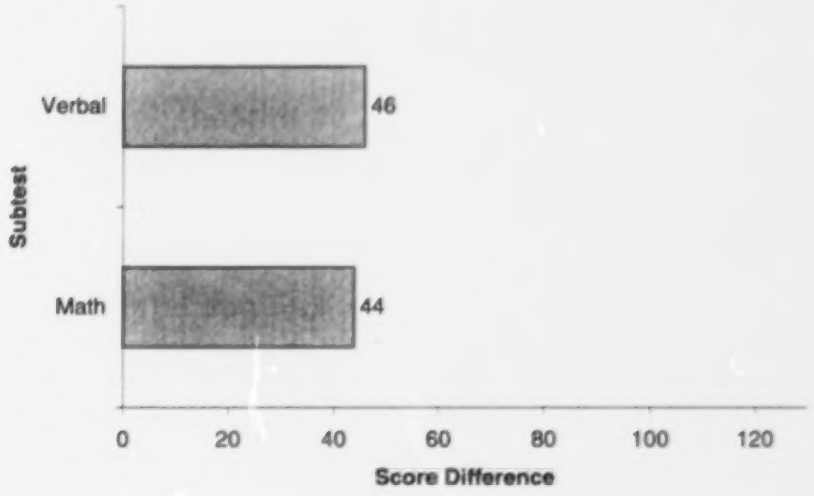


Figure 6:
SAT I Math and Verbal Mean Score Differences between National Test-Takers and GCS Test-Takers (National – GCS)



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IV. Mean SAT I Math and Verbal Scores and Achievement Gaps by Ethnicity

- White students in the GCS scored higher on SAT I Math (531) and Verbal (527) than any other racial group. (*Figure 7*)
- African American students in the GCS scored lower on SAT I Math (411) and Verbal (422) than any other racial group. *(Figure 7)*
- Asian American students in the GCS scored nearly the same on SAT I Math as White students. *(Figure 7)*
- White students in the GCS scored about the same on SAT I Math and Verbal as White students nationally. *(Figures 7 and 8)*
- African Americans students nationally and in the GCS scored somewhat higher on SAT I Verbal than Math. *(Figures 7 and 8)*
- The gap in SAT scores (Verbal and Math) between White and African American test-takers was somewhat larger in the GCS than nationally. *(Figures 7 and 8)*
- The gap in SAT scores between White and Asian American test-takers in the GCS was 8 points in Math and 70 points in Verbal. *(Figure 9)*
- The gap in SAT scores between White and African American test-takers in the GCS was 120 points in Math and 105 points in Verbal. *(Figure 10)*
- The gap in SAT scores between White and Hispanic test-takers in the GCS was 94 points in Math and 92 points in Verbal. *(Figure 11)*

Figure 7:
GCS Mean SAT I Math and Verbal Scores by Ethnicity

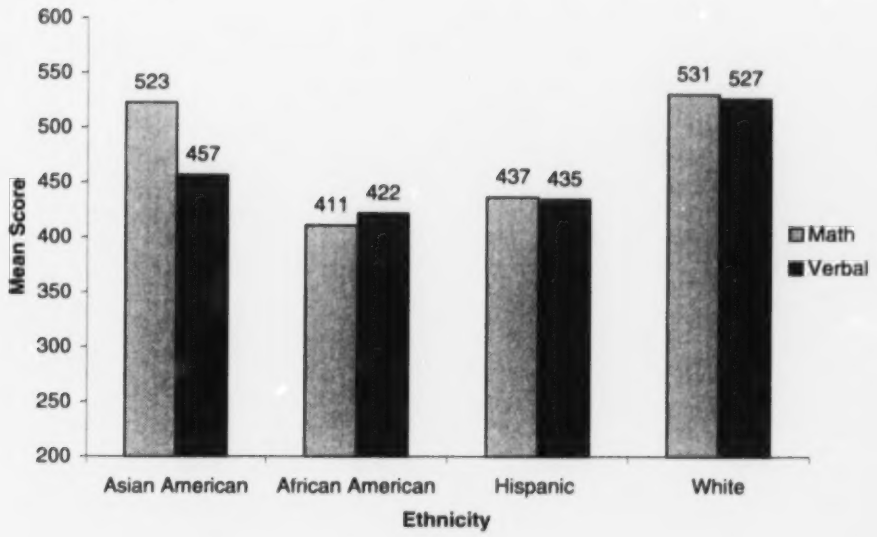

Figure 8:
National Mean SAT I Math and Verbal Scores by Ethnicity

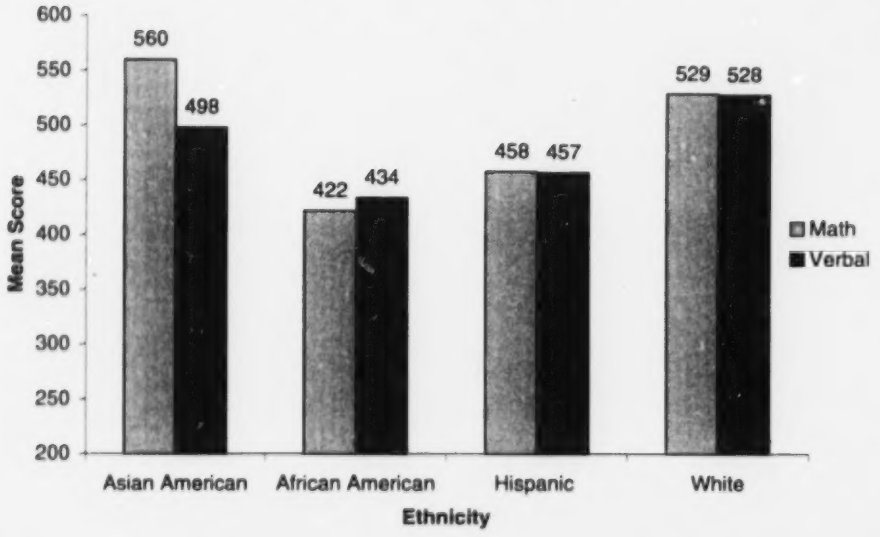

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Figure 9:
SAT I Math and Verbal Mean Score Differences between GCS White Students and GCS Asian American Students (White – Asian American)

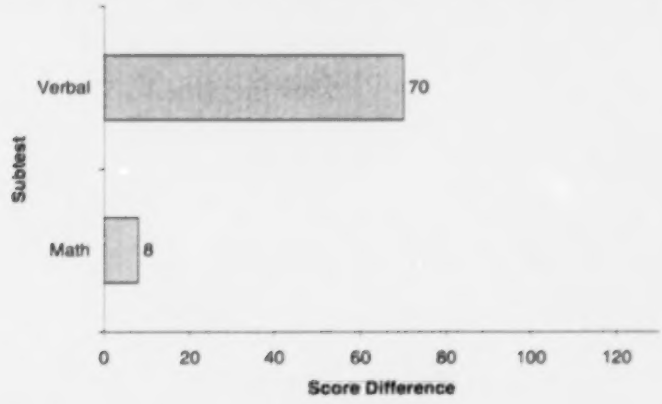


Figure 10:
SAT I Math and Verbal Mean Score Differences between GCS White Students and GCS African American Students (White – African American)

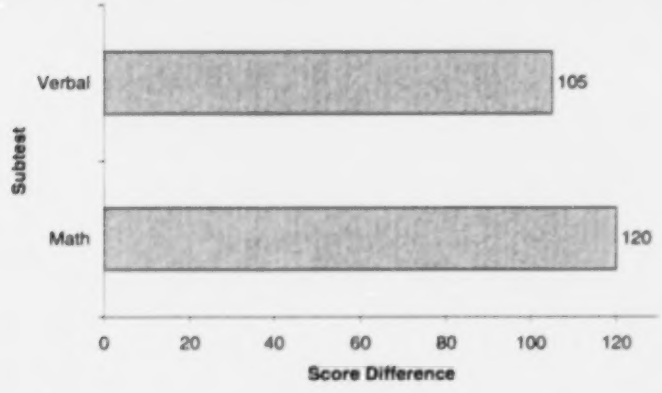
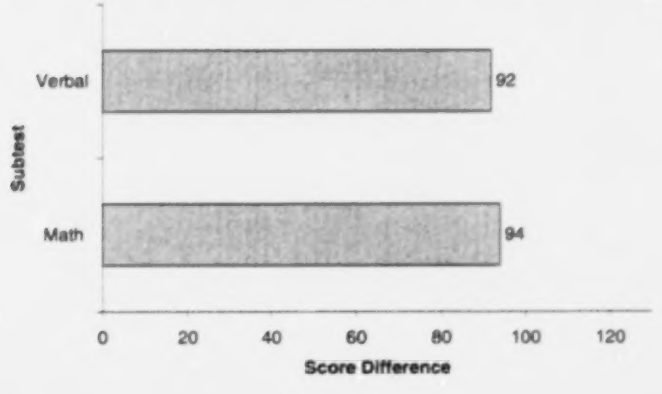


Figure 11:
SAT I Math and Verbal Mean Score Differences between GCS White Students and GCS Hispanic Students (White – Hispanic)



V. Mean SAT I Math and Verbal Scores and Achievement Gaps by Gender

- Males (491) in the GCS outscored females (452) in SAT I Math. *(Figure 12)*
- Males (467) in the GCS outscored females (455) in SAT I Verbal. *(Figure 12)*
- The gap in SAT scores between males and females in the GCS was 39 points in Math and 12 points in Verbal. *(Figure 14)*
- Achievement gaps between males and females in the GCS were similar to gaps between males and females nationally. *(Figures 12 and 13)*

Figure 12:
GCS SAT I Math and Verbal Mean Scores by Gender

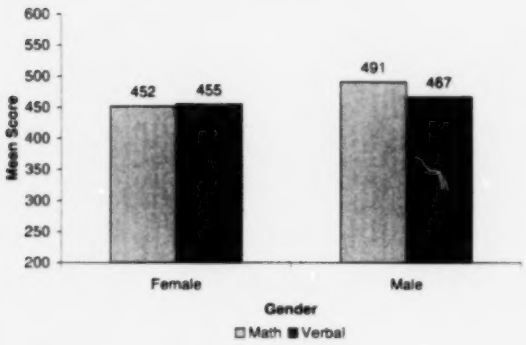


Figure 13:
National SAT I Math and Verbal Mean Scores by Gender

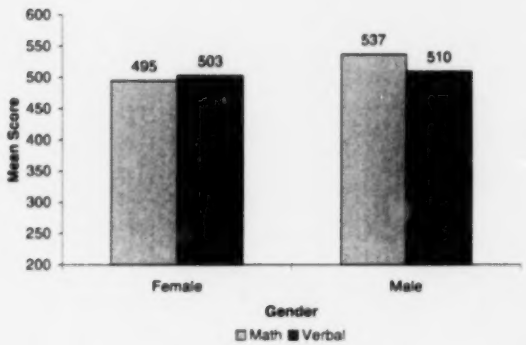


Figure 14: SAT I Math and Verbal Mean Score Differences between GCS Male Students and GCS Female Students (Male – Female)

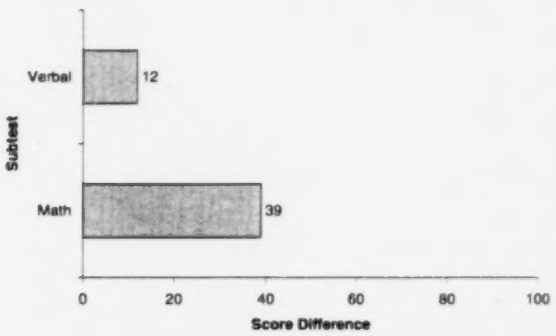
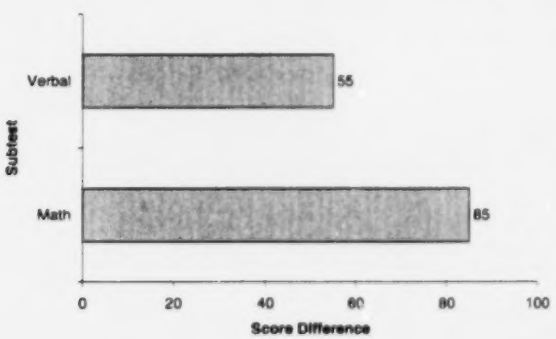


Figure 15: SAT I Math and Verbal Mean Score Differences between the Nation's Male Students and GCS Female Students (Male – Female)



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VI. Mean SAT I Math and Verbal Scores and Achievement Gaps by Academic Preparation and Ethnicity

- Approximately six out of 10 SAT I test takers in the GCS and nationally had core or more academic preparation. *(Figure 16)*
- White test-takers in the GCS and nationally were more likely to have taken core courses than all other racial groups. *(Figure 16)*
- Students with core or more academic preparation in the GCS and nationally outscored those with less preparation. *(Figures 17-20)*
- White test-takers in the GCS who took core courses scored about the same in SAT I Math and Verbal as White test-takers nationally. *(Figures 17-20)*
- Asian American test-takers in the GCS who took core courses scored better in SAT I Math than African American and Hispanic test-takers and about the same as White test-takers. *(Figure 17)*
- White students in the GCS who took core courses scored better in SAT I Verbal than all other racial groups. *(Figure 19)*
- White and Asian American students in the GCS and nationally with less than core preparation scored better on SAT I Math than Hispanic and African American students who took core courses. *(Figures 17 and 18)*
- White students in the GCS and nationally with less than core preparation scored better on SAT I Verbal than Hispanic and African American students who took core courses. *(Figures 19 and 20)*
- The average gap between White and Asian American test-takers with core preparation in the GCS was 56 points on SAT I Verbal. *(Figure 21)*
- The average gap between White and African American test-takers with core preparation in the GCS was 118 points in SAT I Math and 102 points in Verbal. *(Figure 22)*
- The average gap between White and Hispanic test-takers with core preparation in the GCS was 88 points in Math and 85 points in Verbal. *(Figure 23)*

Figure 16:
Percentage of GCS and National Test-Takers with Core or More Academic Preparation, by Ethnicity

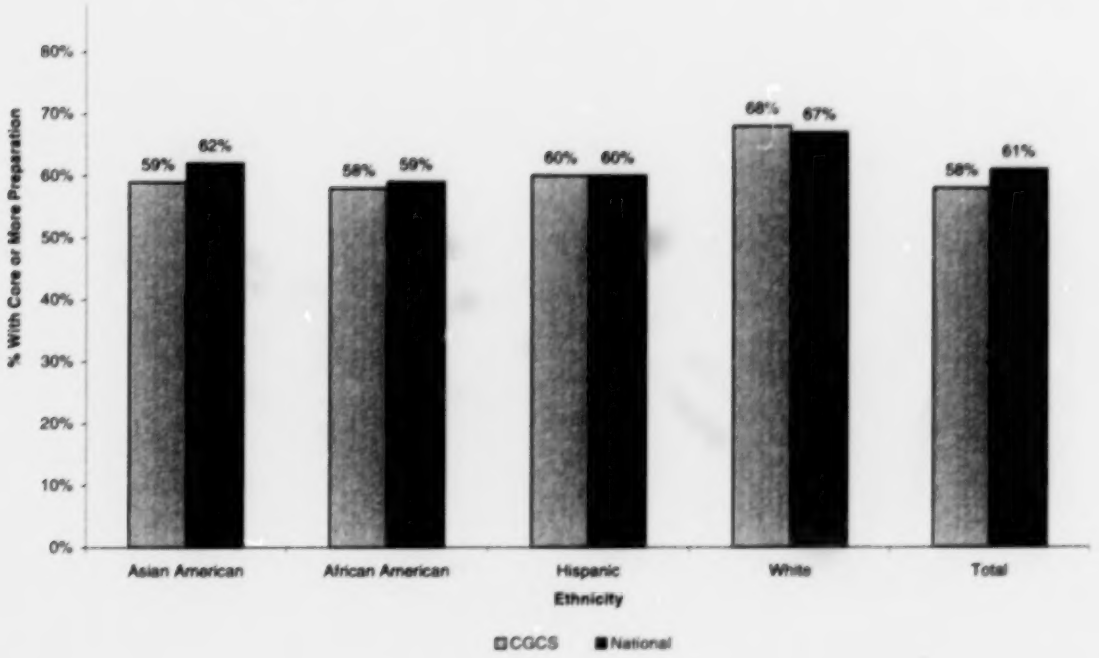

Figure 17: GCS Mean SAT I Math Scores by Core and Less Than Core Academic Preparation and by Ethnicity

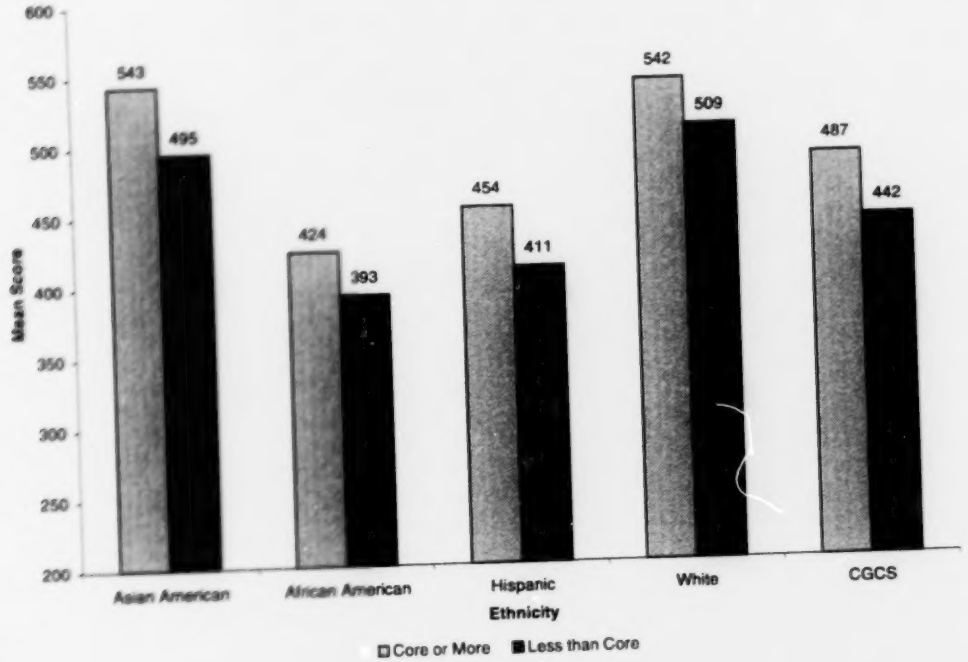

Figure 18: National Mean SAT I Math Scores by Core and Less Than Core Academic Preparation and by Ethnicity

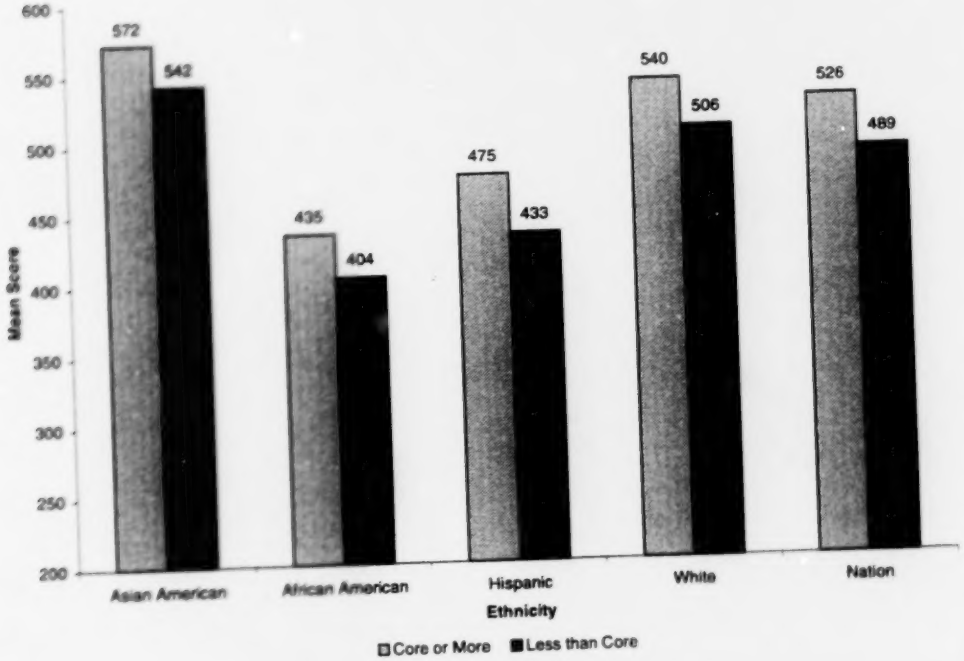

Figure 19: GCS Mean SAT I Verbal Scores by Core and Less Than Core Academic Preparation and by Ethnicity

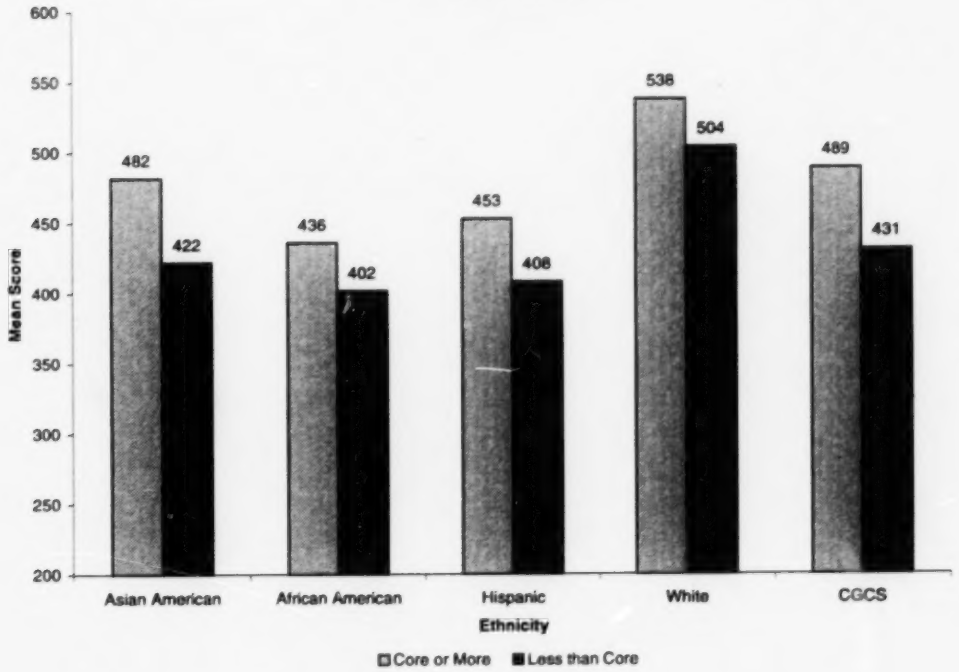

Figure 20: National Mean SAT I Verbal Scores by Core and Less Than Core Academic Preparation and by Ethnicity

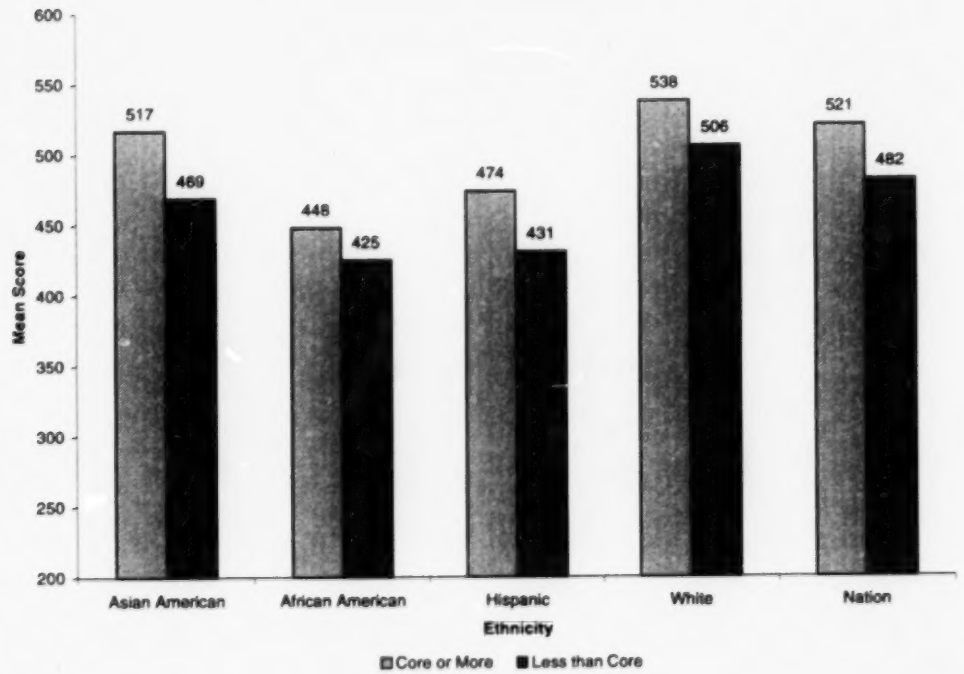

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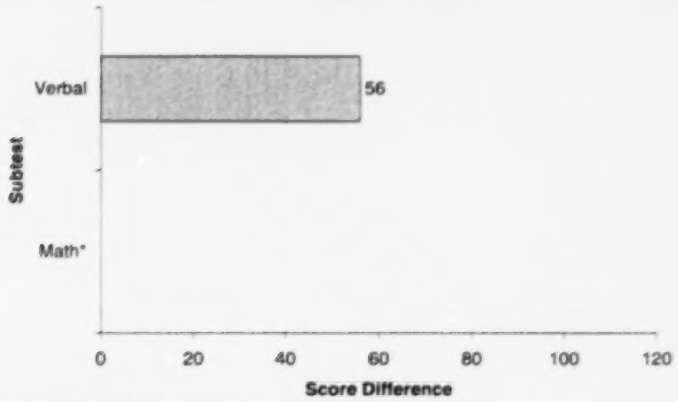
Figure 21: Mean SAT I Math and Verbal Score Differences between GCS White Students and GCS Asian American Students with Core or More Academic Preparation (White – Asian American)



*GCS Asian test-takers outperformed GCS White test-takers.

Figure 22: Mean SAT I Math and Verbal Score Differences between GCS White Students and GCS African American Students with Core or More Academic Preparation (White – African American)

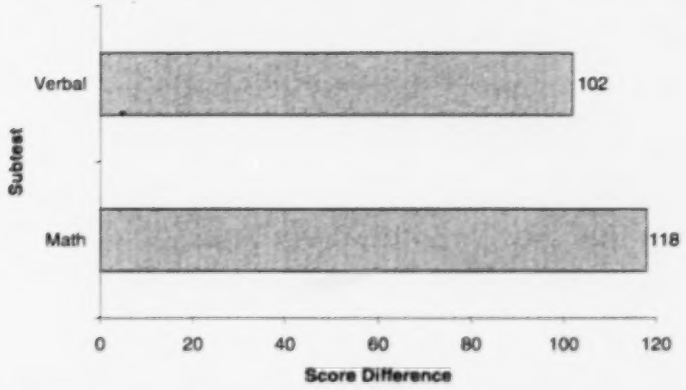
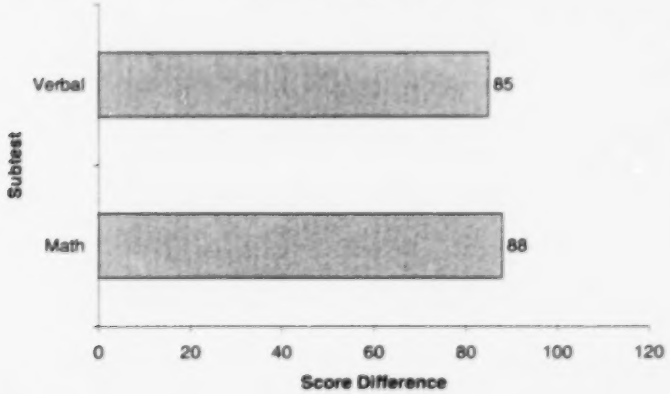


Figure 23: Mean SAT I Math and Verbal Score Differences between GCS White Students and GCS Hispanic Students with Core or More Academic Preparation (White – Hispanic)



VII. Mean SAT I Math and Verbal Scores by Years of Coursework

- Approximately one half of all SAT I Math test-takers in the GCS and nationally had over four years of math coursework. *(Figures 24 and 25)*
- About 70% of all SAT I Verbal test-takers in the GCS and nationally had over four years of English coursework. *(Figures 27 and 28)*
- The average SAT I Math score for GCS test-takers who took over four years of math was 543; and the average score for test-takers nationally who took over four years of math was 576. *(Figure 26)*
- The average SAT I Verbal score for GCS test-takers who took over four years of English coursework was 483; and the average SAT I Verbal score for test-takers nationally who took over four years of English coursework was 526. *(Figure 29)*
- The average SAT I Math score for GCS test-takers who took two years or less of math was 448; and the average SAT I Math score for test-takers nationally who took two years or less of math was 495. *(Figure 26)*
- The average SAT I Verbal score for GCS test-takers who took two years or less of English coursework was 447; and the average SAT I Verbal score for test-takers nationally who took two years or less of English coursework was 501. *(Figure 29)*

Figure 24: GCS SAT I Math Test-Takers by Years of Mathematics Coursework

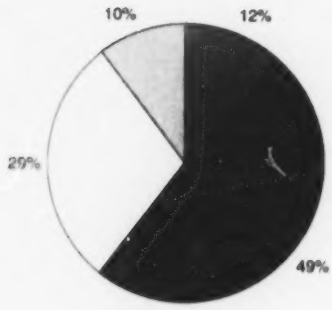


Figure 25: National SAT I Math Test-Takers by Years of Mathematics Coursework

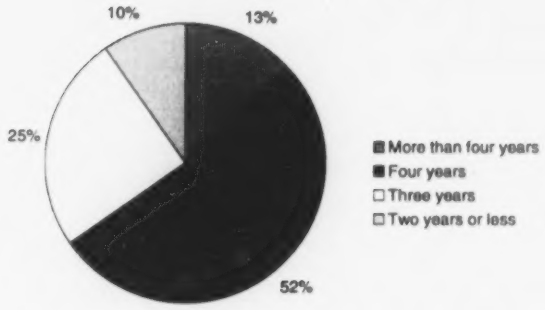


Figure 26:
GCS and National Mean SAT I Math Scores by Years of Mathematics Coursework

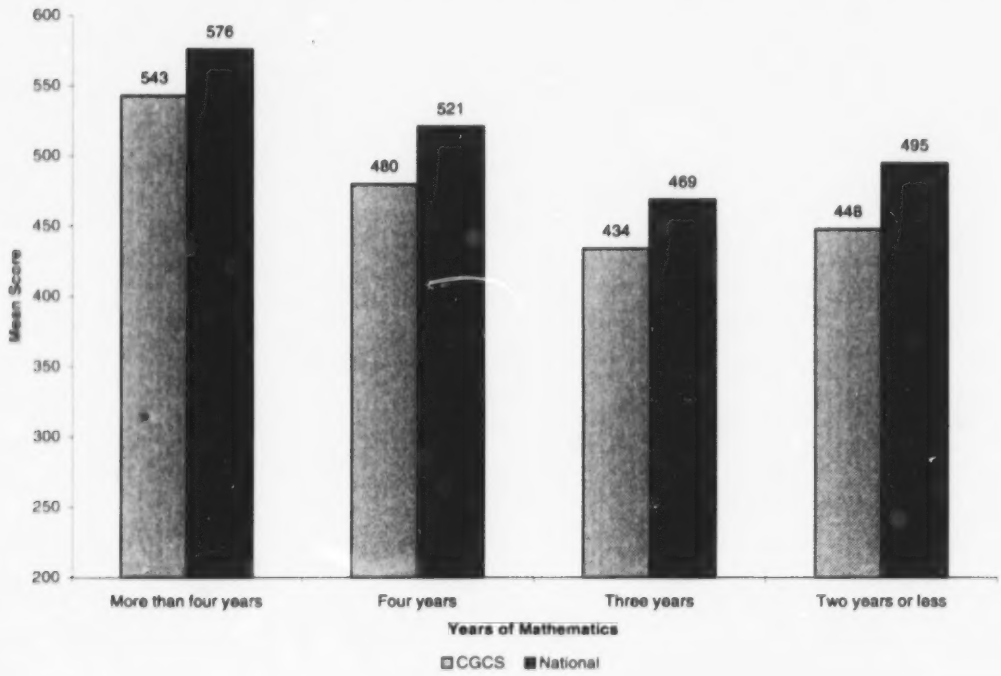


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Figure 27: GCS SAT I Verbal Test-Takers by Years of English Coursework

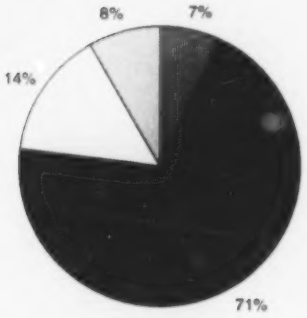
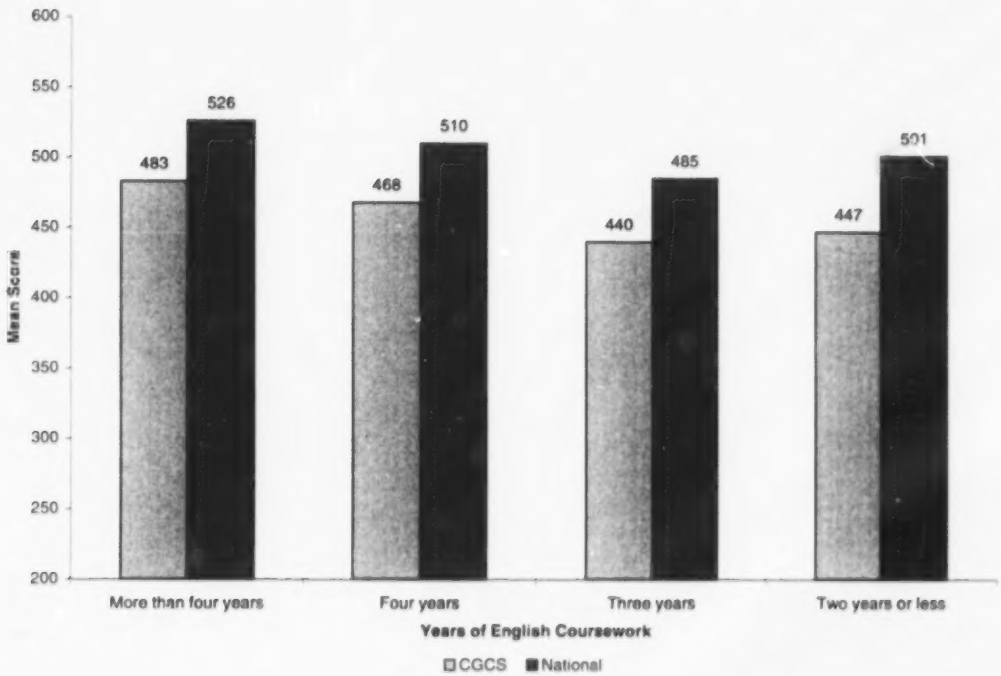


Figure 28: National SAT I Verbal Test-Takers by Years of English Coursework

Figure 29:
GCS and National Mean SAT I Verbal Scores by Years of English Coursework



VIII. Mean SAT I Math and Verbal Scores and Achievement Gaps by Household Income

- SAT scores in the GCS and nationally were strongly related to household income. (*Figures 30-33)*
- The average SAT I Math and Verbal scores for test-takers who had household incomes over $100,000 in the GCS and nationally were higher than for all other test-takers. *(Figures 30-33)*
- The average SAT I Verbal scores for test-takers who had household incomes over $100,000 were identical, 560, in the GCS and nationally . *(Figures 32 and 33)*
- The average SAT I Math scores for test-takers who had household incomes over $100,000 were 566 in the GCS and 571 nationally. *(Figures 30 and 31)*
- The SAT score gaps in the GCS between the poorest and the richest students was 152 points in Math and 163 points in Verbal. *(Figures 34 and 36)*
- SAT score gaps between the nation and the GCS were generally smallest at the highest income levels and largest at the lowest income levels.

Figure 30: GCS Mean SAT I Math Scores by Household Income

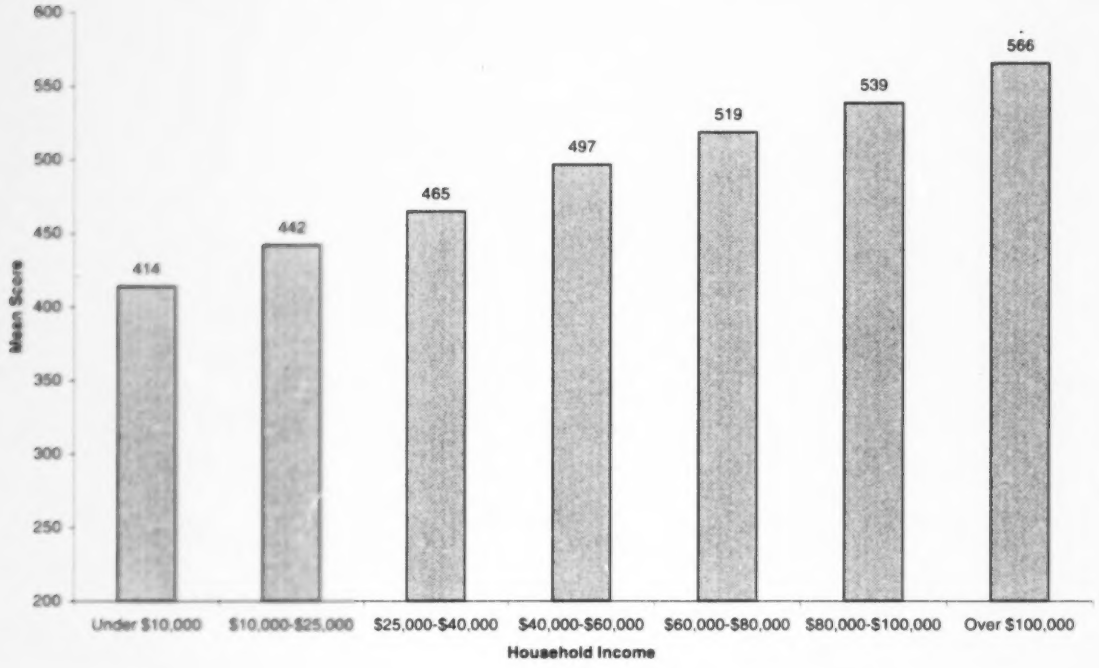


Figure 31: National Mean SAT I Math Scores by Household Income

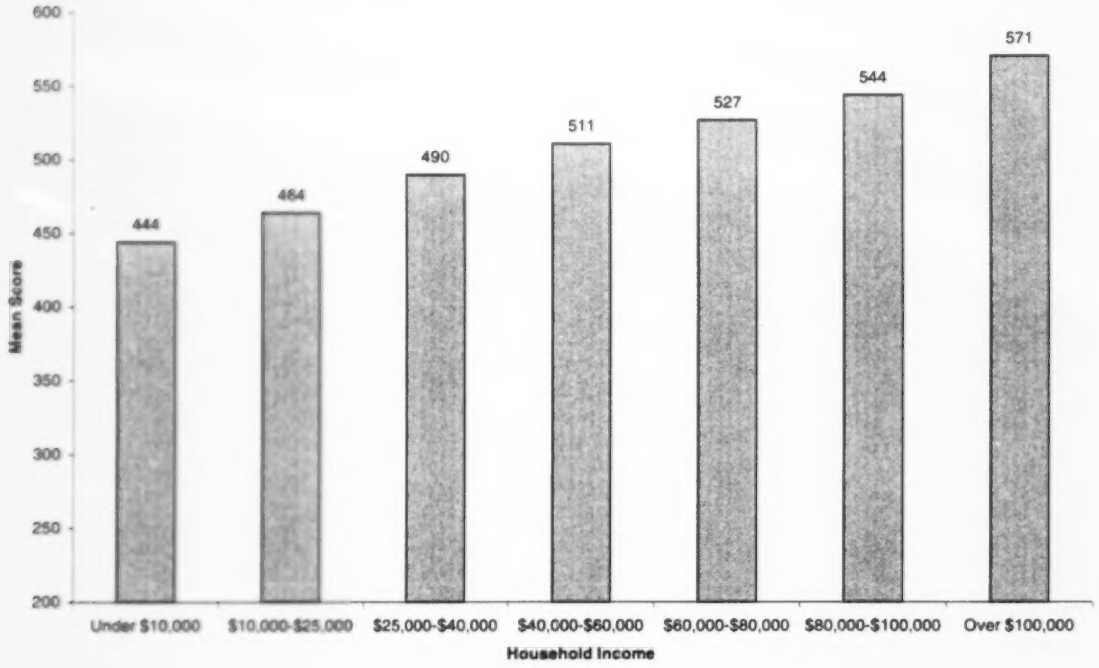


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Figure 32: GCS Mean SAT I Verbal Scores by Household Income

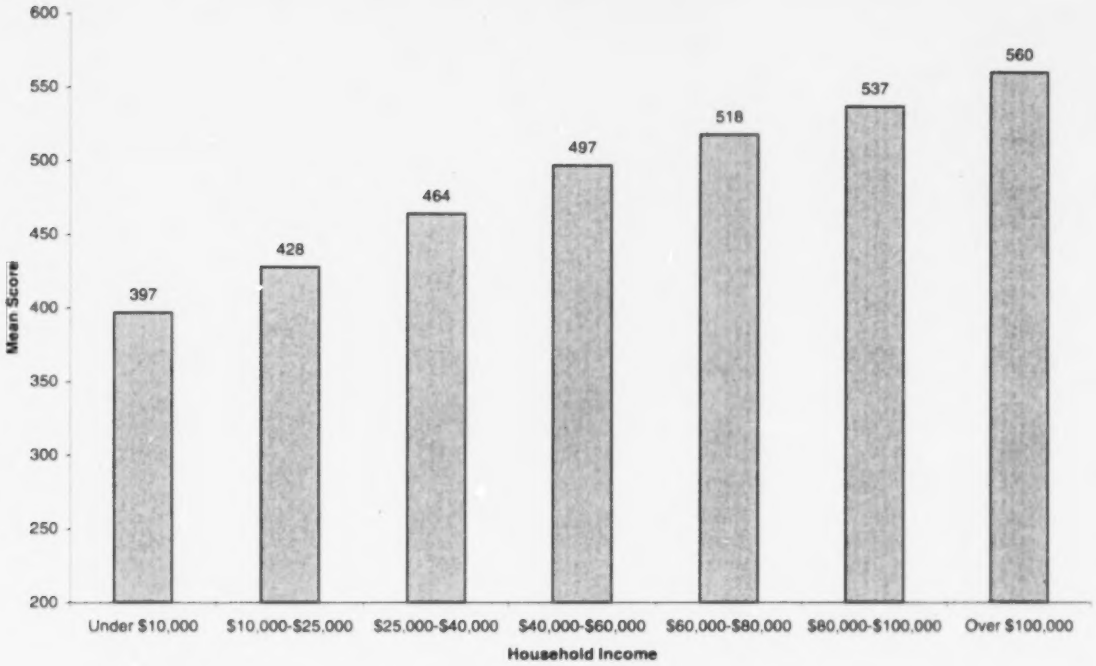

Figure 33: National Mean SAT I Verbal Scores by Household Income

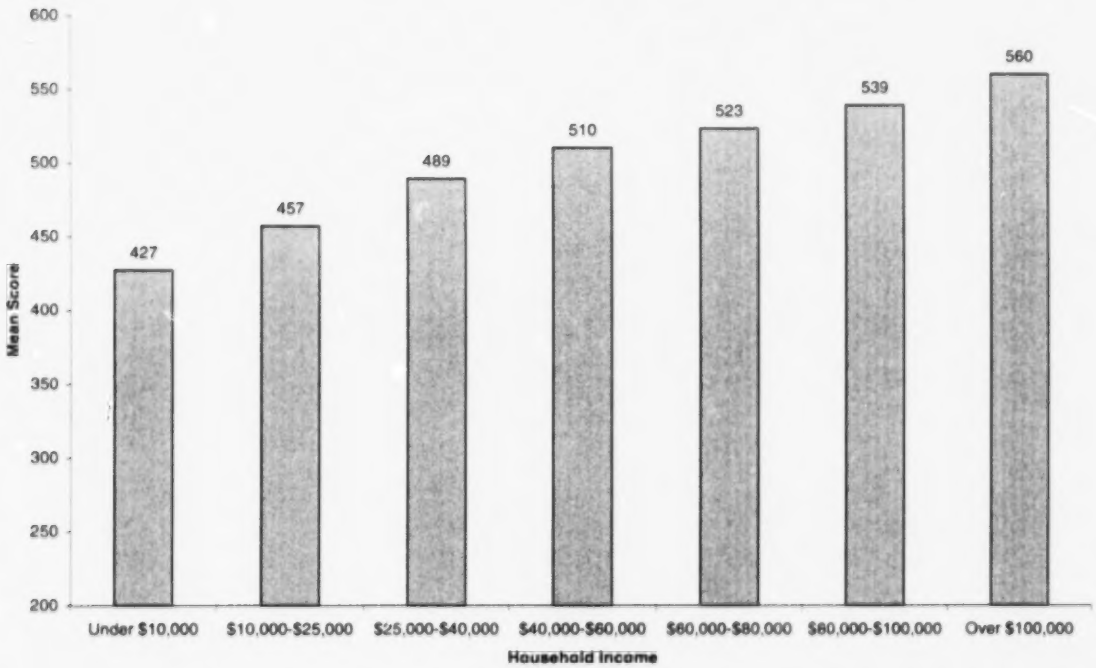

Figure 34: SAT I Math Mean Score Differences between Highest Scoring GCS Students (Household Income over $100,000) and all other GCS Students, by Household Income

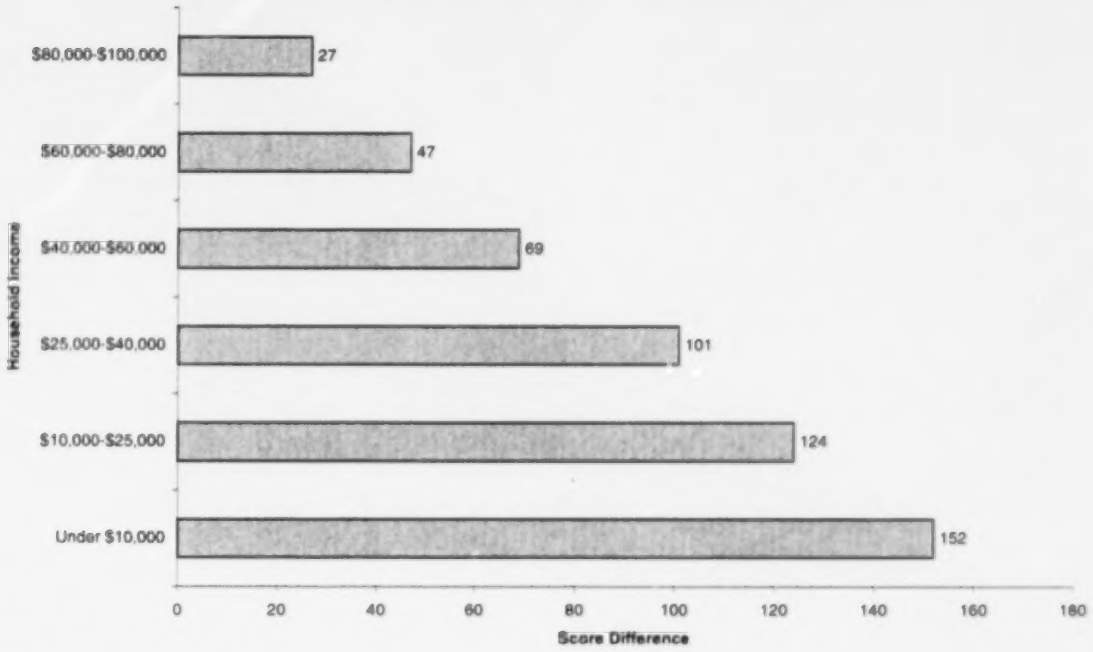

Figure 35: SAT I Math Mean Score Differences between the Nation's Highest Scoring Students (Household Income over $100,000) and all GCS Students, by Household Income

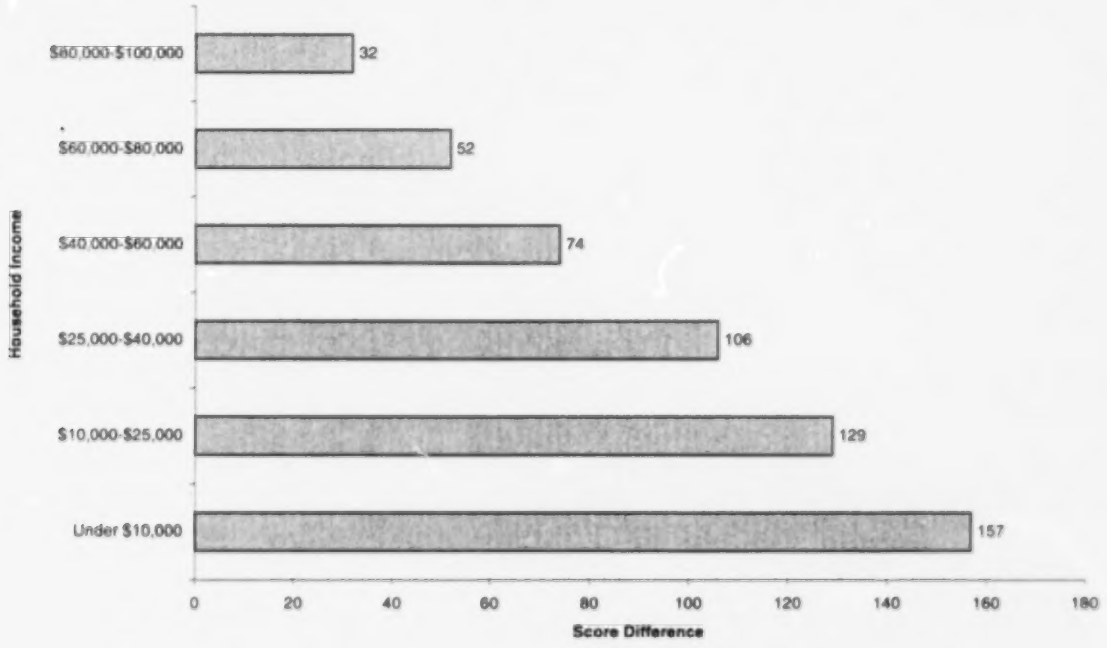

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Figure 36: SAT I Verbal Mean Score Differences between Highest Scoring GCS Students (Household Income over $100,000) and all other GCS Students, by Household Income

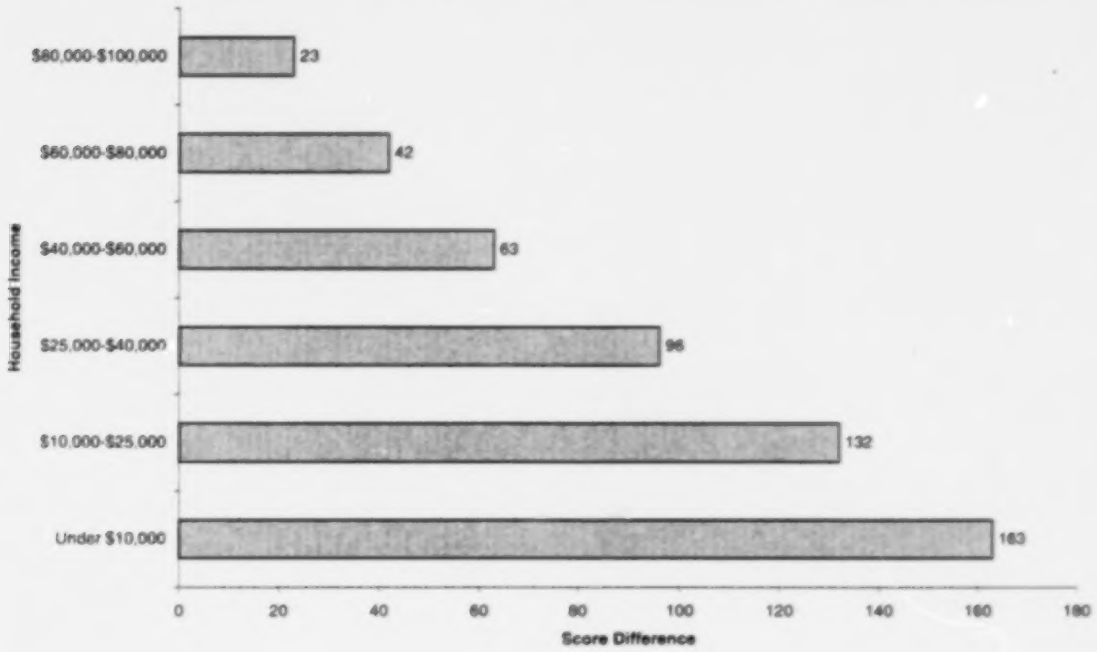
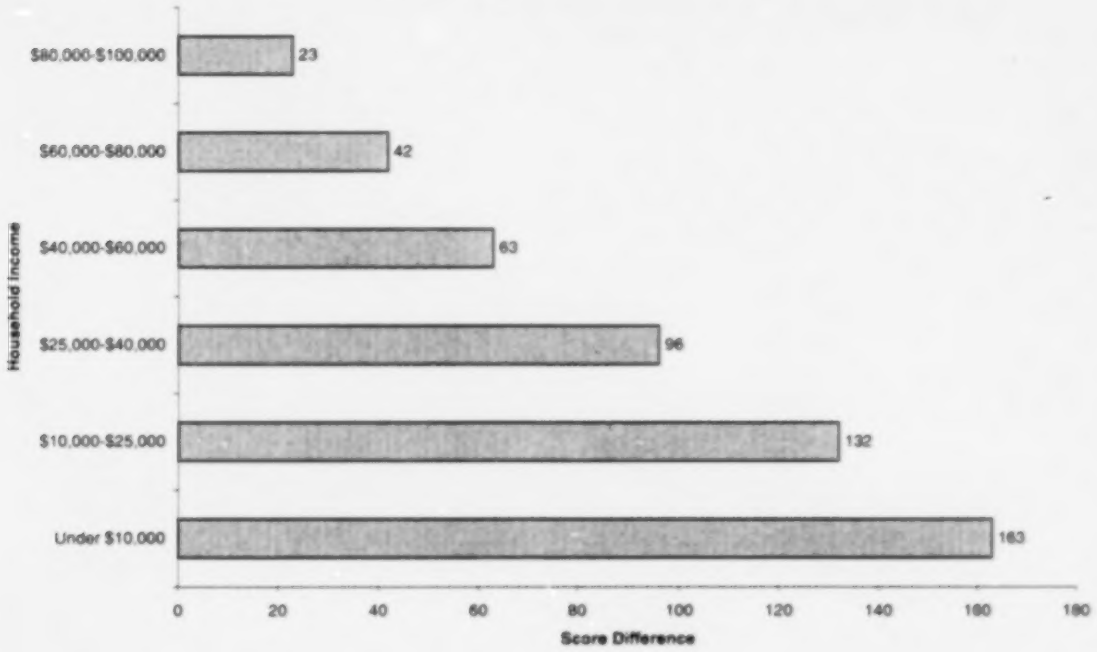


Figure 37: SAT I Verbal Mean Score Differences between the Nation's Highest Scoring Students (Household Income over $100,000) and all GCS Students, by Household Income



APPENDIX A

DESCRIPTION OF SAT I MATH AND VERBAL SUBTESTS

DESCRIPTION OF SAT I MATH AND VERBAL SUBTESTS

The SAT I measures a student's math and verbal reasoning abilities. These abilities are developed over time. SAT I scores can help students and colleges better understand how a student compares with other students preparing for college.

Math questions test a student's ability to solve problems in:

- arithmetic
- algebra
- geometry

Verbal questions test a student's ability to:

- understand and analyze what is read
- recognize relationships between parts of a sentence
- establish relationships between pairs of words

The SAT I is a three-hour test made up of seven sections:

- three verbal sections: two 30-minutes sections and one 15-minute section
- three math sections: two 30-minute sections and one 15-minute section
- one 30-minute "equating" section, verbal or math

These seven sections can appear in test books in differing order. A test book can also present these sections in an order that is different for students taking the test at the same time.

The SAT I does not measure motivation, creativity, or special talents (even though these qualities will contribute to success in college and throughout life).

Scoring Range:

The SAT I reports test results using a scaled score range from 200 to 800 points.

***Source: The College Board Website**

APPENDIX B

DEFINITION OF "CORE" AND "LESS THAN CORE" ACADEMIC PREPARATION

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DEFINITION OF "CORE" AND "LESS THAN CORE" ACADEMIC PREPARATION

Adequate high school course preparation, or "core" academic preparation, is defined as the courses in each content area that many college admissions officers use to assess the likely success of an incoming first-year college student. Those courses include:

- **English** (four years or more):

One year credit each for English 9, English 10, English 11, and English 12.

- **Mathematics** (three years or more):

One year credit each for Algebra 1, Algebra 2, and Geometry. One-half year credit each for Trigonometry, Calculus (not Pre-Calculus), other mathematics courses beyond Algebra 2, and Computer Mathematics/Computer Science.

- **Social Studies** (three years or more):

One year credit each for American History, World History, and American Government; one-half year credit each for Economics, Geography, Psychology, and other history (European, State, etc.).

- **Science Reasoning** (three years or more):

One year credit each for General/Physical/Earth Science, Biology, Chemistry, and Physics.

A "less than core" academic program is defined as any high school program consisting of fewer courses than those included in the core curriculum listed above.

APPENDIX C

GREAT CITY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

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GREAT CITY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

The data in this report include 1998 – 1999 SAT I test scores on the following school districts:

Akron Public Schools
Anchorage School District
Atlanta Public Schools
Baltimore City Public Schools
Birmingham Public Schools
Boston Public Schools
Broward County Public Schools
Buffalo Public Schools
Charlotte-Mecklenberg Public Schools
Chicago Public Schools
Clark County Public Schools (Las Vegas, NV)
Cleveland Public Schools
Columbus Public Schools
Dade County Public Schools (Miami, FL)
Dallas Independent School District
Dayton Public Schools
Denver Public Schools
Des Moines Independent School District
Detroit Public Schools
District of Columbia Public Schools
El Paso Independent School District
Fort Worth Independent School District
Fresno Unified School District
Houston Independent School District
Indianapolis Public Schools
Jefferson County Public Schools (Louisville, KY)
Long Beach Unified School District
Los Angeles Unified School District
Memphis City Public Schools
Mesa Unified School District
Milwaukee Public Schools
Minneapolis Public Schools
Nashville-Davidson Metropolitan Public Schools
Newark Public Schools
New Orleans Parish School Board
New York City Board of Education
Norfolk Public Schools
Oakland Unified School District
Oklahoma City Public Schools*
Omaha Public Schools
Orange County Public Schools (Orlando, FL)
Philadelphia School District
Pittsburgh Public Schools
Portland Public Schools
Providence Public Schools
Richmond Public Schools
Rochester City School District
Sacramento Unified School District
Salt Lake City School District
San Antonio Independent School District*
San Diego Unified School District
San Francisco Unified School District
Seattle Public Schools
St. Louis Public Schools
St. Paul Public Schools
Toledo Public Schools
Tucson Unified School District
Tulsa Public Schools

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ABOUT THE ORGANIZATIONS

The Council of the Great City Schools is the only independent organization in the nation whose sole purpose is improving urban public education. Composed of 56 of the nation's largest city public school districts, the Council promotes urban education and is an advocate for urban students through legislation, research, and media relations. The organization also provides forums for school districts to share common problems and solutions, exchange information, and address new challenges.

The College Board is a national, nonprofit membership association dedicated to preparing, inspiring, and connecting students to opportunities for post-secondary education. Founded in 1900, the association is composed of more than 3,800 schools, colleges, universities, and other educational organizations. Each year the College Board serves over three million students and their parents, 22,000 high schools, and 3,500 colleges through major programs and services in college admission, guidance, assessment, financial aid, enrollment, and teaching and learning. Among its best-known programs are the SAT, the PSAT/NMSQT, the Advanced Placement Program® (AP), and Pacesetter®.